

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5279

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 5, 2013

Title: An act relating to use of public assistance benefits.

Brief Description: Limiting use of public assistance benefits.

Sponsors: Senators Carrell, Baumgartner, Smith, Becker, Schoesler, Sheldon, Rivers, Delvin, Tom, Braun, Padden, Bailey and Hill.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/05/13 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5279 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Carrell, Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Member; Hargrove and Padden.

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: Persons eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families receive their cash grant through an electronic benefits transfer card, also known as an EBT card. Neither the EBT card nor the cash obtained through the EBT card can be used to participate in the following: gambling activities; purchasing lottery tickets; any activities located in a tattoo, body piercing, or body art shop; purchasing cigarettes or tobacco products; or purchasing alcohol.

Specific businesses are required to disable the ability of ATM and point-of-sale machines located on the business premises from accepting EBT cards. The specific businesses include taverns; beer or wine specialty stores; nightclubs; contract liquor stores; bail bond agencies; gambling establishments; tattoo, body piercing, or body art shops; adult entertainment venues; and any establishments where persons under 18 years of age are not permitted.

Initiative 1183, which passed in November 2011, privatized the sale of hard liquor and spirits by requiring the State of Washington to auction off state liquor stores and sell their assets,

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and license private parties to sell and distribute spirits. As a result, contract liquor stores discontinued operating as they had previously.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Neither the EBT card, nor the cash obtained through the card, can be used to purchase marijuana or marijuana paraphernalia.

No later than January 1, 2014, any retail establishment holding a spirits retail license must not accept a EBT card for the purchase of spirits.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): EBT purchases of marijuana or marijuana paraphernalia rather than medical marijuana is prohibited. Technical changes are made to the language prohibiting retail establishments from accepting EBT cards for the purchase of spirits.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: OTHER: The biggest concern is in disabling the point of sale machines from accepting the EBT card for the purchase of liquor. There is concern that retailers will put up barriers to EBT card users in their attempt to comply with this bill that will prevent EBT card users from using their cards for legitimate purchases.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Lonnie Johns Brown, Welfare Advocates Group.